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# The Journal of Interstitial Cinema

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FINAL EYE aka CONSPIRACION (1968 TV)  
By Greg Kikore

This film was produced as a TV movie by Paramount in 1977 and released in 1980. It takes place in a future world of 2098, where computers have replaced many tasks for humans, creating a crime free society. Joe Kortez (KIDNEY, SOMETHING IS OUT THERE, CAT SQUAD) stars as Michael Stringer, a private detective who is one of the remaining few who holds onto the past. He still eats real eggs, drinks alcohol and owns old-fashioned sleuthing methods that were successful in the past. His stubborn nature has his exposing flaws in technology and our reliance on it in order for us remain human. It is this stubbornness, coupled with his dislike for technology, that allows him to overcome the obstacles he faces in the film.

The interesting opening credits are of a high rise building and inter changed footage of a hotel lobby. Several TV movies from the late 70s used a similar shot of a high rise as their opening, including Carpenter's SOMMER'S WATCHING ME.

The film opens with an old man trying to escape from a paradise like resort at night. He gets to the edge of the island, but is killed trying to cross the laser guarded perimeter. Soon Stringer is strolling around with his speech activated typewriter when he is visited and subsequently hired by Lisa Kortez, played by the obnoxious Susan D'Amico, to find her father.

Turns out the man killed at the beginning was her father, Henry Kortez, the inventor of the place. It's called Eden Isle, and it's a paradise that only a select group are allowed to attend, and never leaves Lisa suspecting something is wrong when her father returns as a 40 year old man and not over 60 like he should be. Stringer agrees to take the case and starts by getting into his old VW Corvair 816, attracting the attention of the other residents, who drive standard, machine-like looking energy efficient cars. He heads to the Living Library, a large archive of video files of people who were chosen to tell their life stories to the future. With a working library card, any citizen can go in and get a room and watch a documentary about a person whose story they choose. Stringer has delinquent parking and library cards and makes life difficult for the obnoxious reference librarian, but manages to sneak in and watch Henry Kortez's file.

Eden Isle is now run by ex-scientist George Detlin, played to satisfaction by Donald Friesmann. He is using the lake to create cloned humans. Kortez was originally his partner but broke with him once he saw Detlin's true intentions. Stringer and Lisa are able to get to the island and figure out what is going on and fight and defeat Detlin.

There are a few problems with the film, like how did everyone in society completely shift over to this new future so quickly, as it takes place less than 20 years after the society we know, and why do people need an Eden Isle if society is that perfect? But you won't care. Also, we assume the stuff on Eden Isle are clones, but it's never stated explicitly. The movie ends with Lisa and Stringer getting away, but the last we see of Detlin is the sheriff chasing him down a hallway as the lab blows up, so we don't know if he gets away or not.



It appears the film was shot in Los Angeles, with the Eden Info scene shot in Mazatlan, on the west coast of Mexico. It very much reminds me of the Village from the Prisoner, which was no doubt an influence on this film.

The close race is disturbing. It consists of manequins floating in vertical water tubes filled with bubbles. Perhaps it's disturbing because it's those '70s manequins with big eyebrows and puffed lips. This image was shot and was shown in the memorial on the Gulf channel that made me tape it in Summer of 1983. I don't recall it having been shown again, and it is not available on video.



This film deals with a lot of fears about technology in the way '70s films did, with sometimes amazing prescience, such as the living library being a lot like Youtube. What is even more remarkable is the theme that Stringer is a man who is resistant to the new future which he doesn't like, and actually commits because of this. This is best seen in his conversations with the sheriff and his old police friend. A very memorable scene comes at the end, when Deitler's plan is uncovered and he offers Stringer a piece of the profits, and Stringer shakes his unconscious with a rubber hose, saying "If only you offered me a piece of the past." This is the true theme of the film, which deserves kudos for dealing with blither nostalgia while being upfront in the process. This is due both to Corleone's performance as a stubborn guy with scruples as well as the slicky jazz music that plays throughout, even immediately following disturbing scenes like the mirror scene and the cloning room.

Creepy clones complete with bubbles.

#### PAPER MAN (1971 TV)

By Greg Eklare

PAPER MAN is a TV movie from 1971 with Dean Stockwell and Stefanie Powers, available on a DVD movie pack (Dean Stockwell 2 Movie Set) available in several dollar stores. It takes place where credit cards were new and the fears of things going awry are different than those in Final Eye in that they hit closer to home. This takes place in the real world of that time, so the viewer sees this as something that could happen.

It starts at a college campus where a nerd receives a credit card under the (wrong) name of Henry Norman, so he and his friends decide to charge up a bunch. They recruit computer whiz Avery, played by Dean Stockwell, first to reprogram the large mainframe in the school's basement so that Henry Norman is listed as a real person, and then back into banking systems so that all loans are covered in case anyone finds out. Soon, the members of this small group of friends are killed off in ways related to computer errors, such as one getting a wrong medical diagnosis printed and then given a lethal dose of insulin. Another is crushed by an elevator gone haywire, and in a big horror set piece, a kidnaper is reprogrammed by the mainframe to electrocute the jerk who came up with the plan in the beginning. Avery befriends Powers, who feels bad the clones took advantage of him, tries unsuccessfully to delete Henry Norman, and becomes the prime suspect for the murders. Although the mainframe seems to be acting on its own, it is gradually revealed that Avery's marker Art, who also works with the mainframe, is a fugitive on the run for murder and is trying to kill Powers and frame Avery when they figure out his plan. In a clever sleight of hand using Avery's programming skills, Art is exposed, and after a gun battle with federal agents he leaps to his death out of a high rise office building. Avery is vindicated, but not before there is a twist at the end where we learn the mainframe predicted how Art would die, suggesting that the computer is self aware, self reliant and malicious.

This film is a bold count suspense thriller, and quite scary for a TV movie. The killings are creative and the terror scenes are skillfully handled, the most notable being of Tina Chen's character running down a hallway while the computer shuts off the lights. There is an incredible image of her running towards the camera while the lights shut off that creates the image of a black silhouette quickly getting larger behind her. Stockwell and Powers have good chemistry and everyone seems frightened and power less in the face of the dire events that are taking place. PAPER MAN is significant historically—it was made during the era of mainframe time sharing systems, prototyping client server architecture. The idea of one computer running all systems is now prevalent in the mainframe architecture and the fear of one computer having the power to fall and cause chaos was most likely a big topic of conversation back then, even more so with people starting to snap with credit cards as well. The bestselling book 'The Coming Dark Age' by Vance would come out soon after this film and deal with the same collapse of machines that humans are dependent on for survival. This movie is a warning for students.

By BF Whangyong

As we approach the end of the celluloid era of filmmaking, it's worth taking a look back at the end of cinema's first great period: the Silent Age. Here are six myths that have grown up around that long ago era.

1. "Silent films were filmed to move faster than today's films." This is wrong, of course. Silent films were projected at a different speed than films are today, but that's because they were filmed at a different speed. When audiences saw these projected they appeared no faster or slower than today's films do. The confusion started when silent films were projected with modern equipment, which is designed only to show films at the modern rate, making them appear faster than they're supposed to.
2. "THE JANE KINGS was the first sound film." This isn't true, either. Wilson had experimented with both sound and color films as far back as 1906, but it wasn't until THE JANE KINGS that the industry was ready to make the switch. However, many people initially felt sound was a gimmick like 3D which Wilson also pioneered that wouldn't last. The awful sound and dramatic elegance required to capture sound in the early talkies turned off some audience members to those new films, but by 1928 most of the kinks were worked out.
3. "Movies were more original then." Not really! Most movies were adapted from books, plays or magazine articles, and when sound came in, an awful lot of them were remade, which should put to rest any "Hollywood is out of ideas" talk. Hollywood's problem today isn't a dearth of ideas but rather the selection process they use to pick the movies that get made.
4. "Griffith invented the close up." This is false. Close ups had been used as early as 1900. But Griffith was the first to understand its use as a creative device, and to edit it into a scene to heighten the dramatic impact.
5. "Silent films were chaotic and primitive, and therefore boring." Not true at all. This is the arrogance of the present toward the past. Silent films had audacity (MONTAGNE'S THE RHYTHM), graphic violence (THE CRUCIFIED) and perversion (WEST OF BEARHORN). In reality, films made before 1928 were largely free of censorship—unless instituted on a local level or by the studio itself—and some would probably not be allowed on network TV today.
6. "Comedian Fatty Arbuckle raped a young actress to death with a Dole bottle." Fortunately not. Although it took three trials to clear him, when the full facts of the case came out, Arbuckle was cleared of wrongdoing, though his career never recovered.



*Hang in there, Rossini!*

#### THE DAYS WHEN INVENTORS: DESCRIBING THE DREAM OF PERPETUAL MOTION OF FISH UPON WAGE

By Doug Eklund

When the earth is viewed from afar, each human action appears distinctly as one specific musical note. Some are done so frequently that their notes meld into one unbroken, perpetual tone, one note. Examples of these would be births, deaths, marriages, divorces, births, etc. There is one action that is performed very frequently, but not frequently enough to create the sustained note. That is of a fist crashing into a face. Given or received, this is a dream of almost all humans. Whether the desire to punch someone in the face is created by social conditioning, nerves, anger, war, or distortion to the work place or playground, it is something all humans hold deep. This dream—to feel the impact of rocking a face, to experience the slower travelling up from wrist to elbow, is real. Even if one's fingers are hurt, the memory of that act is linked upon with fear by both the doer and the listener of the story. The problem is that too many humans on earth are too weak in mind and body to indulge in their dream to have the perpetual music note seen and heard from above the earth along with the other actions mentioned above. But with the advent of cats, an organism that punches its face and others like it all the time, it is done.



A cat is an animal that is worshipped by most human women and some men. What they are at heart are programmed killing machines. They are designed to kill on sight any moving organism smaller than them. Not for food, but for play. The paradox of the owner who loves the cat is that if a switch were pulled and the owner became small, the cat, feral or not, wise for life or not, would immediately pounce, ripping the owner's head from body, flesh from bone, breaking bones, leaving half-skeleton, half-meat, chewed carcass into a corner, bored. Not as cute then, but as it is, this is how they are. But when interacting with other cats, their energy is boxing matches, being pre-programmed with thousands of different boxing combos, many of which are executed at lightning speed. Their speed is unlimited, and the specifics of the combos are unknown. A champion human boxer would not last long against a cat opponent, with its speed and skills, were it large enough and on two feet in the ring. Hence, the cats engage in this fist or face performance daily, achieving the human dream, while additionally filling the gap that humans do not by bringing the members of fist on face experts to the level that is needed to create that one sustained musical note needed to those viewing the earth from afar.

## COMPUTER BEACH PARTY (1968)

By Greg Kikore

COMPUTER BEACH PARTY is a comedy, shot in 1968 but released in 1969, concerning a beach where people go surfing until the mayor is involved in a plot to annex it and set up lifeguard stations, preventing surf riding. Our hero Andy and his pal Dennis are opposed to the plan, but can do nothing. While practicing his surfing, our hero falls in love with Alyson, the beautiful but goofy mayor's daughter. She likes him too and they hit it off. Our hero is a computer whiz and uses his skills to invite a bunch of people to a house party. Alyson is sort of dating Turk, a ruthless jerk who is secretly working for the mayor. It turns out that there is hidden gold under the beach and the mayor wants to annex the beach, annex it and get rich.

Upon watching this, one notices that this film must have been plagued with production problems, which is sort likely why the film was shelved for 9 years. The location sound must have been terrible, since the whole film is AM 4, and badly at that, so many lines are cut off with the actors mouths. The high point of the bad dubbing is shown in a premature ejaculation scene, which is a must see. Also, there doesn't seem to be any coverage, as it



*You like the beach. I like computers. Say, I've got an idea!*

There are useless cutaways to strip-tease breaks and our diagrams are attached. It would have taken such to place something out, and it looks like they just shot a screen whenever. The love diagrams are quite reminiscent of Anthony Edwards's computer while some in REVEREND OF THE BEACH, which was a big success at the time this film was made. There's an idiotic subplot of the police chief constantly being eluded by a speeding chicken car driven by an elderly lady.

One thing that stands out is the cuteness of Alyson, making her a typical of sort blond bimbo in these films. Also, it was shot in Salveston, TX, so that gives it a more unique look, as opposed to all the shot-in-CA films of this genre. It even has a pivotal scene shot in the Salveston Historical Museum.

If you're an 80s completist, or need to see every beach movie, then maybe you should take a gander, but the title is very misleading and exhibits a lot of lost potential.



*Despite getting four performances in COMPUTER BEACH PARTY, Panther's career failed to take off.*

## Other movies about beaches

- **Blood Beach (1960)** — a grotesque monster living under the sand sucks people in and kills them.
- **The Longest Day (1962)** — Americans and Nazis face off on Omaha Beach in this World War 2 movie.
- **Beaches (1988)** — a grotesque monster (Bette Midler) and a rich lawyer have a lifelong friendship.
- **The Beach (La Spaggiola) (1994)** — An ex-prostitute and her daughter face discrimination at the beach.
- **Einstein on the Beach (1976)** — Not a movie but Philip Glass's first opera.
- **Beauty on the Beach (1993)** — Mighty Mouse short.

Love in the Time of Hope and Change: LUISA SARFELLES (2004)  
by BF Whetungany

The year is 1969 and Napoleon's men are ravaging Europe. Power wad, destructive and arrogant at close, from a distance and through second hand stories they will absorb enough virtues of the French Revolution that their sweeping stay of Europe's ancient patchwork of feudal kingdoms is still seen as a liberation by the suppressed middle classes. The kingdom of Naples is tenuously run by the decadent Bourbon King Ferdinand IV, who prefers spending his days hunting and eating to actually ruling, and the French armies have set their sights on him and his mismanaged state, and like the doomed politicians of any age, he is willfully ignorant of the gathering storm both around and underneath him.

This storm is embodied by Luisa Sarfelles, a Bourbon noble's young wife who disavows she sides with the Revolution, in the Tavianic retelling of the 1964 Alexandre Dumas historical novel *The Magellitan Lover*. Luisa was a young person whose life Dumas reconstituted into a tragic love story, and the Tavianic chooses to see closely to the author's fictionalization of events, but for different ends.

The film opens with Luisa (Impericalia Laertitia Canto) having her palm read and being forewarned of a violent death by execution at the hands of the state. Shortly afterwards she admits to the old fortune teller that she married Cavalliere Sarfelles, her much older husband, at the destined request of her father, and that although he has a great tenderness for his daughter, he is deeply wretched—true love. This declaration of desire with the foreboding of her death seems to link the two themes in the way Dumas intended what he wrote that, "Love and Death are twins, born on the day of creation, and Love is the elder of the two and the stronger. But a day passes but Love fights with Death and overcomes. The kingdom of Love was well established when the kings of Death sent their shadow over it."

But the Tavianic does not interfere in the philosophical dictionary of Love and Death, or in Fate. By opening with this scene, they're setting up Luisa as someone who's fully conscious that her actions will have repercussions, having been warned of her end, at no point will she be able to claim that the decisions she makes unexpectedly led her to it. Like the protagonists of the most enduring of the Tavianic films, she's an individual caught up in a time of great social upheaval, and the Tavianic's real interest in her story lies in the effort her personal choices have on her destiny. There is a cinema of conscience, not ideology, which is why they're the Europe's most social living filmmakers.

The use of a fortune teller also harkens back to earlier films in the Tavianic's oeuvre: the rural magic expressed in the nursery rhymes used to ward off evil in *HUNT OF THE SHOOTING BEARS*, the inescapable fate of the Denebites in *FOUR*, and the oppressive peasant beliefs in *KASH* and *PAUSE FOR BREATH*.

Luisa's loyalty is first tested when a wounded Bourbon Palestrin (Adriano Stancu), son of Stanislaw falls in the street outside her door moments after getting her fortune read. She and her half brother bring him in and attend to his wounds, discovering in the process that he was on a mission to carry a letter to the French Lucetta Fucini (Lucia) in Naples. Treating him as if he were killed or die of his wounds if they throw him out. Luisa decides to hide him in the attic from her husband. Already, compassion—not yet even passion—is betrayal, for if Salvato is discovered by the King's men it would mean a charge of treason against her and her husband.

As Salvato recovers, he and Luisa begin an affair and quickly fall in love, but the war intrudes. Ferdinand is convinced by his scheming Neapolitan wife Marietta and Admiral Nelson to march to Rome and drive out the French army, and Salvato feels obligated to join his regiment and fight them. But when he arrives, the city has been abandoned by the French, who have regrouped between Naples and Rome to pick off Ferdinand's army. Devastated, Ferdinand returns to Naples in disgrace with the French army including Salvato close behind. Knowing that the arrival of the French will mean the end of the Kingdom of Naples, the King and his son make plans to flee to Sicily during the night.

Cavalliere and Luisa cannot speak what they hearts feel. He loves her and wants her with him but tells her to stay in Naples, where she belongs, certain that she'll remain safe at the hands of the Jacobins. She refuses out of obligation to him, and sends him off the quay as their small boat prepares to ride the rough waters to Sicily. At the last moment he orders the boat away without her. She calls out for him to come back and retrieve her, but her words are lost among the waves between them. In her heart she knows he knew she loved another and sacrificed his own love for her.

Part one of both the book and the screenplay and here, with Luisa's guilt ridden decision to pursue Salvato representing the Neapolitan's tentative steps toward political freedom. The second half details the rise and fall of the Partenopean Republic, the most lived state founded in the liberal name of Ferdinand's escape. The Tavianic portrays the birth of the new state as chaotic, a world away from the argumentative Japanese frame of the new American constitution had used in Philadelphia. A desire long suppressed—whether for freedom or passion—erupts uncontrollably, and the Tavianic seems sharing the exuberant rebirth of the spirit, press and legal system to meet the needs of the people are equal parts joy and anarchy. Nothing better embodies this unrefined spirit of hope and change than the newly reunited Luisa and Salvato, who trial away from the celebration to make love on an abandoned stage, only to be discovered and applauded by a gathering crowd. When word of this extended act of rebellion reaches the government in exile in Palermo, it scandalizes the King and queen and devastates Cavalliere. Having buried himself in the study of philosophy and history following his exile from power, he is informed of Luisa's public infidelity while in a library, where the accumulated knowledge of the world can't keep his heart from breaking despite his reason telling it not to. This is the sympathy of old men, as the Tavianic, no longer the revolutionaries of their 1960's film like *UNDER THE SIGN OF SCORPIO*, shows the losses that come with every cultural shift even as they welcome the change. The sense of history having passed as if it had been present since their first feature film, *ST. MICHAEL HAD A SCOOTER*, and is presumably a very personal memory, judging from their autobiographical masterpiece, *HUNT OF THE SHOOTING BEARS*.

It's difficult for Americans to judge how seriously we're supposed to take the Jacobins' newfound freedom. Partly idealistic like the Paris Commune, this apollonian kind of state reorganization is now associated with inept authoritarianism, and the French virtues of "liberty, fraternity and equality" have been seized by progressives of our own time, whose top down "liberation" from tyrannies like greenhouse gases and second hand smoke come not at the ends of pikes or pikes but



*Readers hoping for a picture of Laertitia Canto must make do with the Tavianic instead.*

through burdensome statutory regulation and media enforced political correctness.

As the Jacobins start to realize that there are "too many artists" and not enough of a hierarchy to structure their new society, Luisa is again forced to cut a tie to her past. Andrew Baker is a royalist who has always loved her and comes to her with the details of a plot to kill the leading Jacobins, including herself. Her half brother overhears this confession and the plot is thwarted, but Baker is executed for his own expected role in it. The Jacobins misinterpret this victory by parading Luisa around the city and giving her the crown of their virile republic, but not before she sees Baker one final time in the hours before his execution. He all but repudiate our own principles in moments of distress, he says unapologetically, having willingly given his life to spare hers. Even more so than with her husband, here the line between love and selfishness has been blurred to the point where she can no longer distinguish between them.

Royalist forces march on Naples, and the French army is unexpectedly recalled to their border, leaving the Jacobins unprotected. A successful trick by an underground faction of royalists to plant poison in the leading Jacobins' cellars inspires the remnants of the Parthenopean Republic, whose lives have yet to benefit under the Jacobins, to rise up against them. The city descends into civil war and Luisa goes into hiding as a nun. Salvo's forces, outnumbered by those of the returning King, are promised safety if they concede, but are betrayed and imprisoned. Luisa, unwilling to cut her strongest tie and lose Salvo, sheds



*This famous 1874 painting shows the incarcerated and pregnant Luisa knitting baby's clothes while awaiting her execution. Two versions of the story were filmed previously, first in a 1942 film made under the Fascist regime, and then later as a TV-movie in 1983. In the 1963 version, Luisa was played by Lella Azzurri, who played the lead in the "Telephone" segment of Mario Sesti's Black Sabbath the same year.*

his disguise and is imprisoned along with him. He is executed but she is given a nine month reprieve when Cavallone learns she is pregnant. While she comes to term, the remaining Jacobins are hanged in front of cheering crowds of peasants, with the women executed without their underwear as is order to give "no show for the police of men".

Luisa gives birth in prison and the baby is taken to by Cavallone, who agrees out of love for Luisa to raise it as his own. Like Benito Mussolini, whose similarly tragic yet fictionalized life and death inspired Italian artists for centuries, Luisa's destiny is both gruesome and unfair. Her appeals exhausted, she is sentenced to be beheaded, but at the moment of execution instinctively releases her head to look for her baby. The axe slices the neck and she briefly staggers to her feet before the executioner cuts her throat from behind.

An epilogue shows Luisa's grown son in South America riding alongside Simon Bolivar, apparently

having inherited Salvo's revolutionary instincts. As with their version of Tolstoy's original ending for their 2001 miniseries *RESURRECTION* depicting the same character's religious awakening with a more 20<sup>th</sup> century journalistic feel, the Tardanos here appear uncharacteristically hopeful. This unconvincing postscript is more likely a concession to the constraints of television's dramatic demands than an indication of old age optimism on the directors' parts, since their final film to date, *THE LAST PAIN*, offers a typically ambivalent finale.

Also arising from their misanthropic quality of their films, those scenes where conventional narrative and temporal boundaries give way and the directors' historical and irrelevant voices suddenly encompass into the spiritual realm the conversations with the dead in *KAOS* and *ALLGEMAIN*, the children's mixed fantasies and memories in *SHOOTING STARS*, the comically divided fates in *PROFITS* and *YOU LAUREN*, the unsettling social isolation in *NIGHT SUN* and *DE MICHAEL*, and even the battlefield reunion in *GOOD MORNING, BABYLON*. Lacking them, their miniseries work is theoretically but not stylistically coherent with their oeuvre, despite many familiar personnel (like Rinaldo Ossola for *LUISA SANGUINETTI* behind the camera).

Nevertheless, there are no more heads for this material than the Tardanos. No other filmmaker has so consistently or intuitively explored the individual's relationship to societal change, or shows such understanding for multiple points of view within a historical context. The French revolution as used here is yet another analogy for the revolution of their own age, the 1960's, when the classical standards of the West were dissolved into the fractured, as yet undefined, era of today. As survivors of both the failed dream of the 1960's and World War Two, it's no wonder their optimism and romanticism has always been tempered with a sense of loss. Perhaps this is why they reserve so much sympathy for Cavallone.

by BJ Whelan

The stress of the 1960's and 1970's holds a special place in the hearts of movie buffs. The nation was at its artistic peak, and during the twenty five year interregnum between the closed studio system of the Golden Age and Hollywood's modern allegorical structure, filmmakers enjoyed many of the freedoms that artists in other mediums consider a natural right. The films made in this interregnum mirrored the hope, vitality and profitability of the post war Baby Boom generation, while also reflecting their fears and doubts about the institutions they'd inherited.

The Baby Boomers are a generation defined in demographic terms. Few levels of prosperity, technology and societal advances allowed the Boomers' parents, the so called Silent Generation, to have families as large and healthy that eventually the Boomers made up half the American population. They were also the best educated generation in American history, and destined to create a world in which the two World Wars and Depression would not be repeated.

As the Boomers matured, some of the best American films of the era sang harmony to their concerns. Sexual abuse was becoming social protest against government injustice was encouraged, and realistic depictions of violence and war tried to make sense of the events playing out on the nightly news. Of all the things lost by the infantilism of classism from the 1950's onwards, this social acuity, currently discouraged by the incest relationship between politicians and the news/entertainment arm of media conglomerates, is the most unfortunate.

The Boomers' sense of age and film kept pace. As they entered the age range in which previous generations had started having children, films like *THE OMEN*, *ROSEMARY'S BABY* and *THE EXORCIST* appeared, reflecting their own attitudes toward children. Perhaps unsurprisingly for such a selfish generation, the Boomers' antipathy toward procreating created the demographic bust known as Generation X, resulting in some of the lowest birth rates since in American history. As they reached their mid thirties, thoughtful films dealing with the economy of having a family, dealing with the corporate world, and the desire to restructure one's societal equilibrium by outgrowing the demands of their 1940s began to appear, but around this time the industry structure also changed, and by the late 1960's Hollywood films had begun their long slide into social childhood.

It's tempting to blame the Boomers for finally growing up, getting real jobs, and reinstituting a social conservatism under Reagan that was indicative of their parents, effectively taking out the rebellious and reflective films of their youth for the endless juvenilia that dominates the multiplex today.

But hold on a second. Who really made those films we love so much? Arthur Penn's *SOMMER AND CLIVE*, John Schlesinger's *MIDWINTER GARDEN* and *Pokey* and *Wally* were often cited as redefining the boundaries of acceptable subject matter, and Penn was born in 1928, *Pokey* in 1918 and Schlesinger in 1925. Stuart Rosenberg, whose *OOH HAWK LUCK* and *POKEY* were defined cool can conformity, was born 1925, and *POKEY* was a screenwriter. Thomas Mink was born 1941. George Roy Hill, of the so against everybody films *BUTCH CASSIDY* and *THE HOLE IN THE WALL*, was 1928. The Boomers' secret social critic, Robert Altman, was 1926. Stanley Kubrick, forever linked to the anti both *BENJAMIN FRANKLIN*, anti censorship *CULTURA*, and progressive sat *FI* 1901. *BLACKBOARD* *CRASHED* *CRASHED* was 1926. The western film was reinvented and reinterpreted by Sergio Leone, 1909. Mike Nichols, born 1931, directed Hollywood's greatest coming of age film, *THE GRADUATE*. Nichols' film was stylistically derived from the previous year's *A MAN AND A WOMAN*, directed by Claude Lelouch, born 1920. Of the other French heroes of mid century cinema, Godard was 1920, Truffaut 1932, Rohmer 1933, and Drey 1921. The French also had a big influence on Woody Allen, whose *ANNE HALL* and *MANHATTAN* are among the most beloved films of their era, but who was born 1935.

In general, the movies that defined the Boomers' twenties and thirties were not made by them. They were made by



Steven Spielberg, just before directing *Duck*

Michelangelo Antonioni (1903), Blake Edwards (1924), Arthur Hiller (1925), Ken Kesey (1927), Nicholas Ray (1926), Hal Ashby (1928), Roman Polanski (1933), Sydney Pollack (1934), Francis Ford Coppola (1936), Peter Bogdanovich (1936), Brian De Palma (1942), George Cukor (1942), Martin Scorsese (1942), Victor Fleming (1943), Walter Hill (1943), Bob Fosse (1943), George Lucas (1944), James Toback (1944), John Milos (1944), and Richard Warner Fleischer (1945). Even the decadent tail end of the Boomers' youth, as captured in *SATURDAY NIGHT FEVER*, was directed by a man born in 1940, John Badham.

Why are these films so associated with the Baby Boomers? Mainly because the Boomers were their parents' consumers. Baby Boomer children grew up in an atmosphere of privilege, education, and leisure, and they demanded more from their art and artists than their parents had. But they also depended on these same, a generation ambivalent toward organized religion, they looked to popular culture for meaning but attack the ability of a song, film or book to advance the rapidly evolving popular culture with the ability to change the world. Although no one falls for this fallacy any more, the hope that it's true still



George Lucas playing future toy sales

lingers on in popular imagination.

The Silent Generation—the same generation that survived the Depression, won World War Two, built the suburbs, got seen on the moon and passed civil rights legislation—was the one that made the films generally regarded as the greatest of the medium. These films reflected, influenced, and defined the formative years of their children, the Baby Boomers. And today those films are still watched, discussed, argued about, debated and admired, forty years on. All of which makes the Silent Generation label something of a misnomer.

The Boomer generation did produce some great directors, and many of enormous savvy and skill. Steven Spielberg, David Lynch, Oliver Stone, Spike Jonze and Joe Dante were all born 1946. The three John Carpenter 1948, Hughes and Landis, both 1906 and two Don Coscarelli 1944 and Brian Koppelman 1950 have all made exceptional films. And despite the best efforts of the Hollywood system, great films continue to get made. But the deflection of film's cultural currency is obvious to anyone with awareness of its history. Sixty years after their birth, the Boomers have refused to relinquish their cultural dominance, despite the fact that their tastes have grown stale and their vision myopic. For the medium of film to progress, they must leave the stage.

The first step in overcoming the hegemony of the Boomers is to recognize their primary cultural role was as





by BJ Whangyency

When Adolph Hitler came to power in 1933, Hollywood stayed quiet. Jack Warner closed the Warner Brothers subsidiary in Berlin after a Jewish employee was forced to resign, but the studio heads adhered to Roosevelt's posture of "defensive neutrality" regarding the content of the films themselves and avoided mentioning current events in Europe. This was partly because they were scared of the Hays Office, which kept propaganda out of films, and partly because the American people were afraid in the Depression and apathetic involvement in the war, even as late as 1938, clearly six percent of the public wanted to let Europe settle the matter itself. As a result, fascism in Europe went artistically uncompensated in Hollywood while the Nazis themselves turned out propaganda films of undeniable beauty and skill.

The first American film to mention Hitler was the poverty row studio PRC's *HITLER, BEAST OF BERLIN* (1934), which German American groups got banned in New York and New Jersey. Warner Brothers' *CONFESIONS OF A NAZI SPY* followed, and the other studios finally joined in, unleashing a torrent of anti-Nazi movies that caricatured unabated to this day.

The one man who dared expose the growing fascist threat to Europe in the 1930's was Frank Capra, the decade's most spiritually enlightened director. He chronicled the death of freedom in Europe with a trilogy of tragedies mislabeled in 1940's *THE MORTAL STORM*. Like nearly all his films, *THE MORTAL STORM* is subtle and poetic, true to Scorsese's faith in the power of love to overcome the worst aspects of man's nature. In the same way that his *HEATHEN* (1931) reimagined the sinking of the Titanic as the destructive act of a vengeful man on the losing side of a love triangle, *THE MORTAL STORM* explains the Nazi disaster on a human, rather than political, level. "We try to show the fanatic fervor that motivates it, but we don't excuse it," Scorsese only explained during filming, but the film ultimately does condemn it by attempting its values.

With the rise of the left wing *NEUROS* and the right leaning Fox News, the public has become aware of the growing indistinction between the news and partisan propaganda. It's more difficult, however, to be equally vigilant to the propaganda in popular culture, the goal of which is not to achieve art's classical function of enlightenment but to instill and repeatedly reinforce social and behavioral norms. Although they often coincide with those of the Democratic Party's, these norms and values do not stem from any defined political entity but instead form a drifting cloud that greases those in its shadow's perception of superior social status. Like all clouds, it is moved by whatever way the wind blows, and one at any given moment change direction and float away to cover other concerns. In the late 1960's and early 1990's, following the collapse of the "threat" of German heavy metal, neo Nazis in the heartland became the focus of fear. It penetrated film culture consciousness from the bottom up, starting in genre films like John Woo's *THE LAST KANGAROO* and documentaries (Michael Moore appeared in the fear mongering *DO BLOOD IN THE FACES*) before reaching a frenzied peak in *AMERICAN BEAUTY*, the most ludicrous film ever to win Best Picture, in which star Kevin Spacey is killed by his elected, right wing, Nazi neo-Nazi milking neighbor.

The Oklahoma City bombing was an outgrowth of the neo-Nazi or "Patriot's" movement of that era, and Hollywood's most direct response to it was *ARLINGTON ROAD*. *ARLINGTON ROAD* was made forty nine years after *THE MORTAL STORM* and provides an instructive contrast to the Scorsese film. First was screenwriter James Krager's script was the Nicholl Fellowship Award a year after the April 20, 1995 bombing, and unusually for a Nicholl winning script, it was quickly picked up, produced and sent to theaters as a major release (in July, 1996) where it debuted at number six. Critical response was generally positive, focusing on the two lead performances and pointing out the script's debt to earlier films like *SHADOWS OF A DOUBT* and *WALLER'S THE STRANGERS*, largely arising from contemporary discussion of the film as its connection to the real event upon which it was based.

It's not a critic's job to treat every film as a work of art, especially when the film is one like *ARLINGTON ROAD*, a ludicrous thriller with no aspirations beyond keeping its audience entertained. But film is an influential medium, and from an historical perspective, it's important to recognize that *ARLINGTON ROAD* functions as the anti-*JFK*, reducing a terrible event to a simplistic genre film that avoids confronting reality while pandering to public cynicism. Rather than encouraging discussion the way *Stone's* film does, *ARLINGTON ROAD*'s simplicity redefines the real bombing within the confines of a B movie narrative, and because this reduction has been Hollywood's mode operandi for over twenty years, it's easy to assume that "this is just what Hollywood always does" but *THE MORTAL STORM* presents this alternative view of American cinema, and it's worth looking closely at the 1996 film to get a better idea of how "mere entertainment" and values propaganda have become inseparable and almost indistinguishable.

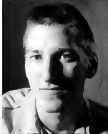
The film's plot is surprisingly uncluttered, lacking subplots and narrative reversals until the final twist ending. Jeff Bridges plays Michael Paraday, a widower who teaches a class on domestic terrorism at George Washington University. His wife was an FBI agent who was killed in the line of duty when her visit to a suspected right wing mosque turned violent. Shortly after seeing his new neighbors Oliver and Cheryl Lang (Tim Robbins and Joan Chen), Paraday starts to suspect that they're actually anti-government terrorists themselves who are plotting to bomb the FBI headquarters in Washington DC. After his son is kidnapped and held hostage to ensure his silence until the bombing is completed, he's forced to take on the large by himself. What he doesn't realize is that he's been played for the patsy all along. Trying to thwart the bombing, he drives to the FBI building to warn them, unaware that his own car is carrying the bomb, which goes off as planned. He's posthumously blamed for the attack, and the Langs start their house and move to a new city to start over.

To start, it's important to recognize that the film does not offer a fictionalized account of the OKC bombing, but is constructed as a sequel of sorts, using the question of, "what if Tim Robbins was just an innocent tool and the real culprit got away?" as the jumping off point. The fictional Roosevelt building in St. Louis, housing the FBI, has already been destroyed before the film begins and is the film's stand in for the real Marshall building in Oklahoma. In reality, an undercover informant on the



Tim Robbins is a terrorist.

ATF payroll named Carol Howe had sent ATF Agent Karen Hinley a report in December, 1994, four months before the bombing, that several residents of a white nationalist compound in rural Oklahoma where she was working undercover had used both the IRS and FBI buildings in Tulsa, along with the Murrah building in Oklahoma City, but the Murrah building had always been the most at-traitive target. Noting both the Secret Service and the ATF, it had been used for bombing back in 1945 by Richard Wayne Snell, the leader of a North Arkansas white supremacist group. In a strange coincidence, Snell, was executed in prison on April 18, 1996, the day of the Oklahoma bombing, and by his side was his spiritual advisor, Rev. Robert Miller, who also happened to run Elkins City, the secretive religious community and compound where Carol Howe was undercover. Furthermore, a man named James Kilian, who had been Snell's co-conspirator in the 1982 plot to bomb the Murrah building, was married to Miller's daughter and was living at the compound at the time of the bombing.



*The devil, probably.*

But Miller, Kilian and Snell have never been directly implicated in the 1995 Oklahoma bombing. The two men undercover agent Howe did meet as planners in the Oklahoma bombing were Dennis Mahon and Andrea Strassmeir. Mahon was a former Klan member, the publisher of the racist newsletter "White Alert" and the proprietor of USA1, a Marxist, which gave callers a daily message of inspirational hate learned from entering Germany and Canada, and a public face for the far right since the 1960's, the gregarious Mahon was Howe's entry into Elkins City, and it was he who introduced her to the mysterious Strassmeir. Strassmeir was the son of an influential member of the German government, a former lieutenant in the Panzer Grenadiers, and had done, according to what he told British journalist Andrew Ross Friedman, undercover assignments for the German Police. After an abortive attempt at joining a Texas militia, from which he was expelled for being suspected of being an ATF operative, he became the head of security at Elkins City. Although he was not a citizen, he managed to get a Social Security number and a Tennessee drivers license, and was identified by Howe as the most vocal supporter of anti government action in the months leading up to the bombing. According to J.D. Doh, a journalist twice contacted for the Politizer for his reporting on the bombing, "Immigration records dating back to 1968 listed him with a coded designation that meant he traveled in a special diplomatic status which carried with it diplomatic immunity."

In the years since McWeigh's trial, facts once suppressed or denied by the government about his connection to Elkins City have become a matter of record. Dennis Mahon and Robert Miller both admitted he was there. At McWeigh's co-conspirator Terry Nichols's trial, Carol Howe testified to having seen McWeigh with Andrea Strassmeir in the summer of 1994. In 2006, Nichols himself told US Representative Dean Ruskenshauser that McWeigh told him "all about Elkins City, and talked about his friend there, 'Andy the German.'" FBI records used in McWeigh's prosecution establish that sometime after making the reservation for the Ryder truck that carried the bomb, McWeigh called Nichols City with the message, "Tell Andy I'm coming through. A receipt from a nearby hotel and a speeding ticket given to him on a rural highway a dozen miles from the compound were uncovered by the Associated Press and placed him near the compound at several different times. Even Morris Deen of the Southern Poverty Law Center admitted to the Denver Post that an informant the SPLC had inside the compound reported McWeigh had been there on numerous occasions, and an FBI memo released a decade later confirmed this. Finally, McWeigh himself admitted to his fellow death row inmate David Hammer that he had frequented the compound. Interestingly, the pseudonym McWeigh never used his own name at Elkins City. The pseudonym he chose was "The Tortoise," the name of Robert DeNiro's anti government terrorist in Terry Gilliam's "BRASSIL."

ALLINGTON ROAD's conception of the shadowy organization to which the Lange belong is nowhere near as detailed or interesting. They await orders from someone we never see, and whose agenda remains unknown to us. Oliver Lang's skills as a structural engineer make him the head of his cell, but beneath him is the organization are anonymous Asian looking types who handle the working class stuff like hauling the bomb making materials in trucks and tapping phones. Their motivations and how they achieved their military like precision is left a mystery. Even Lang's terrorist wife is denied motivation.

And this exposes the film's main structural problem. On the surface, its right wing extremists don't just blend into the suburbs, but actually isolate 1980's suburban life as much that they appear out of step with the 1980's. Mrs. Lang and her daughter go to a church group on weekdays, while their son builds forts with his friends. Their son is also in a version of the Cub Scouts, whose camps Lang knew by heart. Lang wears pastel sweaters of pale blue and yellow, the kind associated with effete Vandy. Truly stereotypes like Red Flanders and Stuart Smalley. This all seems to be setting up a conventional hostility of evil background for them.

But in Lang and Faraday's final confrontation, Lang screams, "Are you happy in your godless suburban life?" at him. The implication for the audience is that his family has been arting the part of suburbanite the entire time, but this is a real head scratcher since it leaves them with no identifiable ideological position. The viewer is left uncertain about how much of the Lange behavior is strictly undercover work for their terrorist group, and how much they really believe. And if we don't know what their core beliefs are, beyond hatred for the government, how are we supposed to understand them?

In reality, McWeigh was an outsider from a Catholic family who was very much a typical working class kid with twelve more Generation X than Baby Boomer. Although his favorite film was, unsurprisingly, *Red Dawn*, when asked to justify the deaths of the non government workers and civilians in the Murrah building, McWeigh used an analogy people his own age would understand, rather than an historical one like John Brown. McWeigh claimed he saw the surveillance and other crime workers he killed as nothing more than storm troopers on the Death Star in *STAR WARS* individually innocent, but guilty by association because they were part of the "evil empire." The other victims who happened to die that day—senior citizens and infants in the building's day care center—were "collateral damage."

The character fulfilling the McWeigh role in the film's St. Louis bombing backstory would not be very different. McWeigh look alike Dean Ruskenshauser was an educationist and a "moderate conservative" who had nevertheless spent time in prison for tax evasion before blowing himself, the IRS building, and 43 innocents up with a truck bomb. Faraday's visit to Ruskenshauser's father confirms what his earlier class lecture had hinted at, that Ruskenshauser was a patsy tricked by the Lange into delivering the bomb, just like Faraday will be. And here's the film's key encoded message: It was Ruskenshauser's "moderate conservatism" that left him susceptible to the influence of extremists, just as Faraday's perfectly legitimate grievances against the FBI for their response to the death of his wife leaves

him open to falling into the League's snare. In this film's vision of America, questioning the Clinton oral government, even when the government is at fault, is the gateway drug to MAGNIFICENT CANDIDATE like manipulation. In that respect, the film is more a liberal response to those outraged by Waco and Ruby Ridge than it is to Oklahoma City.

This is also why the film doesn't dare carry over McVeigh's Klan membership, his shyness around women, and his perverse sense of humor—like the unfulfilled request to have his ashes scattered over the bombing memorial—to Oliver Lang. It was necessary to make Lang a evil Waco and just seductive enough to make the film a warning to moderate conservatives.

But even the film is read as a subtle critique of the FBI's handling of their OKSOMD investigation? Someone arguing this scenario could claim that Parady's and Forbess' treatments at the hands of the Imperial Federal bureaucracy pushed them over the edge of true conservatism into extremism. Although dramatically compelling in a post-9/11 way, this would require an admission of FBI malfeasance by the filmmakers, something they—like the US government itself—refuse to do.

Fundamental to understanding the film's position toward the FBI is their portrayal of Agent Whit Carver, played by Robert Goelet. Carver is the kind of stereotyped African American role that became the norm during the Clinton years. Blackness, grounded and exuding righteous moral authority, the only reason he fails to lead Parady's earnings is because Parady is incapable of expending his suspicion clearly. In the end, both Carver and Parady's girlfriend die because Parady cannot simply lay out the evidence he has against the League without turning into a fooling at the mouth out.

For the film to work, the government must be credible, so as not to generate any sympathy for the terrorists. But immediately after the Oklahoma bombing, stories started circulating that questioned the validity of the government's claim that it had had no prior knowledge of the attack. What initially aroused suspicion was the fact that some of the ATF agents were in the building when the bomb went off at 9PM that morning. When this prompted scrutiny from victims' families, the ATF changed the story to a wild tale involving agents trapped in a plunging elevator kicking their way out. When investigative reporter J.D. Oake contacted the Midwestern Elevator Company, which had actually searched the elevator for survivors after the bombing, an engineer named Duane Jones proved the ATF's story false. ATF agent McCauley, who had made the claim, was transferred to Kansas City and died, but the Justice Department continued to stick to the story.

Other credible people came out of the woodwork to dispute the government's story. US District Court Judge Wayne Alley, who incidentally took off work the day of the bombing, claims that he'd been given a vague warning two to three weeks before to be on the lookout against suspicious persons in the area. And the heads of the Secret Service, DEA, US Customs, and HUD wrote housed in the building were also all out of the office that Tuesday morning. Joe Hansen, assistant Oklahoma City fire chief, initially gave statements in an interview that his office had received a call from the FBI the Friday before the blast to be on the lookout for a terrorist attack, but Hansen subsequently retracted his story. His recantation was undertaken by an April 30, 1998 USA Today story that quoted Harvey Weather, chief dispatcher for the fire department, as saying that yes, the FBI had indeed called the week before.

The film gets closest to reality when dealing with League backstory. His story about his father's landship at the hands of the government parallels that of tens of thousands of Americans, but undercuts the problem. Starting in the early 1970's the US Department of Agriculture compelled farmers to adopt a "get big or get out" policy, a program designed to revolutionize the agricultural export trade. This was done, in part, to replace the trade deficit caused by the gradual shifting of manufacturing overseas. And in the short run, this policy worked. Farmers were able to plant more and sell more, and beans pushed larger and larger loans on them, and the cost of an acre of farmland increased five fold over the course of the decade.

But it ultimately turned out to be the same kind of bubble that destroyed the US economy in 2007. Just as competition with government backed mortgage companies Freddie Mac and Fannie Mae pushed private lending institutions into more and more dangerous territory in the 2000s, the Farmer Home Administration (FHA) created an artificial boom in the 1970's, with the USDA preaching the virtues of bigger and bigger farms as locally as the Bush Administration would push for an increase in the rate of minority homeownership thirty years later. The resulting farm crash destroyed 700,000 family farms between 1980 and 1990, and no amount of Farm Aid concerts could save them. Terry Nichols came from one of those farms, as did Oliver Lang. But the film ignores the social context—the greatest resentment of the American population since the Depression—and reduces Lang's anger to a personal vendetta. Lang is an aporoid white Klan terrorist, like the leaders of the WII hijackings, but Nichols, McVeigh and the population of Elkhart City were mainly rural men who lived off the grid. Lang seems to have put himself through college just to fulfill his dream of blowing up government buildings, but in reality, the most fertile recruiting places for the far right were those where America's true disenfranchised—the white heartlanders who had lost their culture and livelihood to government mismanagement—congregated rural churches, farm foreclosures and hardware stores. And while the FEMA is obviously not directly responsible for the rise of neo Nazism in the Midwest or for the Oklahoma bombing, it did create the conditions that gave rise to them.

Any implication of this kind would be heresy in a modern American film, so would the inference that a government agency was instrumental in setting up the Oklahoma City bombing as a sting which happened to go wrong. But that's where the evidence points, for anyone willing to look.

ALLIANCE ROAD exists in a world where the FBI are a bunch of blundering, clueless good guys who occasionally screw up but never break the law (as illustrated by Carver's refusal to accede to Parady's request for confidential files). Parady's wife died in a Ruby Ridge style operation gone wrong, but the word Waco is never spoken because right wing bad guys in Hollywood never get no moral equivalency, unlike Arab terrorists and other approved minority villains.

The McVeigh was an outraged spectator of the Waco disaster, and claimed the ATF's actions at the Texas compound were what pushed him over the edge from disgruntled nationalist to terrorist. He said American flags and bumper stickers out of his trunk to other protesters who had come from around the country to witness the standoff, and was even photographed and interviewed about it for a local college newspaper. And as the women and children burned to death in front of him at the hands of the government, he realized he was not alone in his outrage.

Waco became the instigating event that bonded a certain type of disenfranchised Midwesterner into a like minded community. McVeigh moved freely within that community, dividing his time between White Nationalist compounds like Elkhart City and



The gun show circuit, Maco would remain an open sore on the American right for the rest of the decade, and as William Greider's essential documentary **WACO: SILENCE OF ENLIGHTENMENT** makes clear, **ARLINGTON ROAD** would have had a hard time working it into Lang's backstory without either giving his case moral equivalence or disrupting the actual event outright.

Like stashed company is the one of the biggest pieces of McVeigh's story that does not fit neatly into government/Hollywood version of the bombing. This is partly because for nearly a decade after the FBI denied they had found any connection between KKKs and the White Nationalist bank robbers that were staying at Elkhart City when McVeigh was visiting. But never released in 2004 to the Associated Press disprove this.

The *Arpan* Republican Army robbed twenty two Midwestern banks in the early to mid 1990s and netted approximately a quarter of a million dollars. The extent of their crimes is detailed in the book *The Bad Company*, but germane to the bombing is the fact that Mike Brown, later convicted of participating in the robberies, was identified by witnesses both in Kansas and Oklahoma before the bombing as being in the company of McVeigh. He fit the description of the John Doe #6 that the FBI searched for in vain after the bombing, and in a questionable coincidence, he was arrested for his role in the bank robberies the very day after the FBI announced that there had never been a John Doe #6.

That others were involved is now beyond doubt. Two of the ASA robbers who ended up talking to the FBI—Mark Thomas and

Peter Langon—admitted that at least one of their gang was involved, and Thomas's ex-girlfriend told FBI agents that Thomas had told her of a plot to bomb a federal building before it happened, warning that Carol Brown had told the



Is this man Andreas Strassmeir?



A "highly-placed source" at the FBI confirmed to the *McCurian Gazette* (July 14, 1996) that Strassmeir (left) was a paid ATF informant sent to infiltrate Elkhart City

ATF McVeigh's Death Row colleague wrote a book in which McVeigh

described how he drove the getaway car at several ASA robberies and how several ASA members accompanied him to the bombing. And before the bombing, three of the convicted robbers lived at various times with the mysterious Andreas Strassmeir at Elkhart City.

The day Terry Nichols visited gun dealer Roger Moore for the money that would ultimately pay for their bank making materials, McVeigh was in at this hotel near a bank the ASA would rob one month later. According to the Associated Press, the FBI had a videotape of the robbery on which McVeigh was suspected to appear, but destroyed it in 1990, despite pleas to the contrary.

Finally, in a 1996 sworn statement, McVeigh's sister Jennifer admitted that before the bombing she had asked her to exchange three one hundred dollar bills that he claimed were from a recent bank robbery in which he and others had participated.

Recent Freedom of Information Act document release prove that the FBI lied when they claimed to the McVeigh defense team that they had found no evidence of a connection between McVeigh and the ASA men. The FBI's confession for the ASA men was **SCORPION**, and a 2006 FBI document release of a December, 1995 FBI teletype admitted that a segment on "Lawrence's Most Wanted" had led to a possible connection between the **SCORPION** and **CRIMINAL** cases. This tip led to the arrest of the ASA members, and subsequently a planned 9 January, 1996 meeting between the teams working on **SCORPION** and **CRIMINAL** was cancelled. The very next day, Andreas Strassmeir walked across the Texas border into Mexico, where he would quickly catch a flight home to Germany another document from 1995 states that McVeigh made a second, longer call to Strassmeir than the one made public, and that an SPLC informant had informed the authorities of ASA members' involvement in the bombing.

The idea that the ATF and FBI had both seeded the White Nationalist assembly with provocateurs and informants, only to have a sting operation go horribly wrong due to a lack of inter-departmental communication, resulting in a massive, all over cover up orchestrated by the Department of Justice, seems like the plot to a paranoid thriller. But in 2009 it appears much more realistic than the now discredited case the prosecution threw at McVeigh. In May 2009, New York City mayor Mike Bloomberg announced the arrest of four Muslims plotting to blow up a synagogue. Infiltrated early on by their ghay by an FBI undercover agent, they were provided with targets, money, a fake Stinger missile and 34 in order to accomplish their attack. They were arrested after wiring order rigged with explosives they believed were real and leaving them outside two Jewish sites in the Bronx.

While the film's script was being written there was good cause to believe that other actors were involved in the bombing. Although most of the hard evidence did not come out until after 2000, solid journalism by reputable organizations had punched holes in the government's **CRIMINAL** theory by its one year anniversary. That the film wouldn't even acknowledge such actions shows both the extent of Hollywood's capitulation to the government/media consensus and the failure of modern films to engage audiences on a level of political sophistication even when pretending to be serious.

If **ARLINGTON ROAD** matters now, it's because film culture has barely budged in fifteen years. Quiet political films dealing with American intrigue in the Middle East filled screens for both of George W. Bush's terms, promising revelation but offering conspiracy theory and single minded liberal bromides. **ARLINGTON ROAD** is not a cinematic milestone or landmark, but just an early example of this type of film, distinguished only by its use of a tragic event as a plot engine and the audacity of the cultural subterfuge.

**THE MENTAL SCORPION** ends with a glimmer of hope. Margaret Sullivan's death at the enemy border may be a bitter reminder to **GRAND ILLUSION**'s studios, some hopeful films, but **Scorpio** was no defeatist. The final image of **CRIMINAL**'s footprints being erased by the snow outside the deserted Bath house laylike the inherently self-defeating nature of Nazi ideology. In contrast, **ARLINGTON ROAD**'s closing shot of a picture perfect suburban street is intended to inspire dream small town normalcy is a facade constructed by crazy white people operating under a guise of tradition and patriotism. This right-wing hopelessness perfectly realises Walter Perry's statement that for modern America, "the happy suburb stands both in danger of catastrophe and somehow in need of it."

It may never be known for certain whether McVeigh was a shell-shocked lone wolf, the primary actor in an underground network of anti-government radicals, or even a traitorous government agent who went "off script," as he claimed in private to Bremer, Nichols and his sister. Unfortunately, **ARLINGTON ROAD** offers nothing to help us understand him or the bombing. It dares only to look away.



## Methods for dating before the age of texting and Facebook: A Conversation with Colt Hawker from Visiting Hours (Interviewed by Buddy)

Buddy: Sometimes I'm shy with girls. Especially on the dance floor. Most girls like to dance but you have to be aggressive to get them to do it. Sometimes you're desperate for dating advice but it's hard to tell if advice that's given to you should be taken with a grain of salt. Here are some dating tips, taken from a transcript of an interview I did with Colt Hawker before his death.

Buddy: I need some advice on dating. I don't know how to go up and talk to a woman.

Colt Hawker: I don't talk to anybody. I wear my bell necklace and the ringing does the rest. Most of these bitches come up to me.

Buddy: And you get them interested this way?

Colt: There are a few older women who want to fuck me, like this old hag actress in my building and an old waitress. I sometimes go out wearing in my sexy leather jacket and I picked up this hot blond in the diner even while being cockblocked by her two friends. I took her upstairs. First I showed her my framed racist correspondence papers to politicians, then I prevented her from listening to her music. One good way to get their pants off is to spill a beer on their pants and then force 'em off. Works like a charm. Then I went to work on her.

Buddy: What if you can't get them over to your place?

Colt: I go to where they are, whether it be their work or home. I was watching a news reporter on TV that I wanted as my source of action was to go to where she was. First I went to the TV studio, where I found a TV room where I could squeeze my bell and ring my bell necklace. I was also able to spend a few minutes unplugging the TV plug and wrapping it around my arm. Then I appeared at her home wearing her clothes and freed her parrot. Another technique I'll do sometimes is sneak into their bedrooms and leave the sink and shower running.

Buddy: What other methods do you recommend?

Colt: I put a flinax service sticker on my van's door. It wasn't big enough to cover up the original van logo completely, but it got me into the hospital with some flowers to see the woman. I go through a few disguises. Alacort got into the surgery ward during her operation, but some asshole caught me putting on the doctors outfit. The hospital was good because they have a go kart I can ride around in the basement and a boiler to lean my head against.

Buddy: How'd it end up?

Colt: Ultimately my game failed. The plan I had for the nurse I had tried to get with agains back at her house was foiled when I stabbed her and left. But I found a great solution. I ate a bunch of sleeping pills and then wrapped a belt around my arm and smashed it into a beer bottle. Then they had to admit me to the hospital, grilling me inside parts of the hospital, past the guards and police so I could continue snoring the TV host.

Colt was found stabbed to death by the woman in question at the hospital. He died with a smile on his face.

Transcribed by Doug Eklund



By Greg Kiskadee

## GHOST DANCE (1980)

GHOST DANCE is a rare 1980 Native American slasher film, the best work of this tiny genre, and deserving of rediscovery. The bulk of the film was shot in Tucson, Arizona, and opens at an excavation site. Dr. Kay Foster, an archeologist who teaches and works at a museum, is involved in digging up some Native American artifacts. This has a strong resemblance to the opening of THE EXORCIST, which this movie was obviously influenced by. Soon after, a large Indian appears and kills off some "conscience people." Foster is doing research on an old late 19th century Indian suit when she begins having visions of the Indian killer, who seems to be trying to make contact with her. It turns out that this Indian is a reincarnation of a murderous Indian from the 1880s who kidnapped a white woman who broke his partner's killing. The woman's sister and a mob captured them and tortured the Indian to death and now his spirit has returned in the 20th century. As Kay uncovers more clues with help from her colleagues, she realizes who this killer is and that the woman he partnered with in the 19th century bears a very strong resemblance to her. She tries to get help from her colleague Tom Eagle, an educated modern Indian who is reluctant to help as he doesn't wish to revisit his more chaotic past. Eventually, after more killings, Tom Eagle agrees to help by having his old worker share a scorecard perform a ritual. Though by this point Kay has been possessed by the killer and tries to thwart them. In the ensuing action, the scorecard uses a fire ritual to burn the killer, but is stabbed to death in the process. Kay sees okay, but in the epilogue, she and Tom are back in the museum lab preparing to burn the remains of the killer when she, possessed again, straps him and kills his offenders with a scalpel.

This is a really well crafted slasher picture, standing out from most of the slashers made around this time, including the stellar scalps, done 3 years later by Fred Olen Ray. The main reason for this is the acting, but the cinematography, lighting, editing and minimal use of music are also first rate. The shots are well composed and there are complex camera movements and predominantly overhead practical lighting, mostly in the museum scenes, which are excellent. This is the only slasher film I can think of with most scenes taking place in a museum. The cinema lighting shows from EXORCIST and museum objects create great atmosphere in a few scenes where characters are being chased or killed. The DP was Fred Murphy, who would later shoot SCENES FROM A MALL and FRIENDS VS. JEROME, with Rod As work by Lisa. Slasher GENIUS II SCHULTZ, POLLOCK and stunt work by Donald Shanks, who would go on to play the Shape in HALLOWEEN 4. Fans of Native American art will find this movie a treat as the artwork is heavily integrated into the set design, on walls, even a shower curtain. The kills are creative too, with each victim dispatched in a different way, one example being a woman skewered on a Native American statue's spear, another where a man is slashed in the face, falls into glass and then has the glass shards pushed further into his stomach. All this after they were having sex inside an antique car exhibit, which was much better than the similar scene in TITANIC. The fire ritual scene is interesting too, with the killer being repelled by a wall of fire. The viewer believes in the characters, and the historical involvement of Native Americans as common knowledge is used partly as a device to make one believe the killer's rage and in addition with all the supernatural connotation and macabre cinema. The museum setting gives it a very believable and real source of terror. It also features late 70's office set design, stellar in look to the office scenes in THE EXORCIST with Morgan Paibetall.



DIAL 1119 (1980): An early techno thriller blueprint for The Hard  
By Greg Kiskadee

Dial 1119 is a B picture from 1980 about a damaged young man who goes on a killing spree which ends up in a bar where he takes everyone hostage while the cops are outside. This film is notable for being an early techno thriller, since the drama unfolding outside is shown on the large TV inside the bar. This may be the first movie to do this. The film also features an early William Burt Foster appearance and an early score by André Previn. Marshall Thompson plays the young killer Gunther Wyckoff, and his performance is reminiscent of Anthony Perkins. He connects a bit, but there is no doubt that he is a cold killer. The patrons in the bar are introduced earlier, before the freeze, doing their own things. One of them is a journalist looking for a Pulitzer prize winning story.

This picture has a few uncanny similarities to The Hard. For one, the whole subplot about the hostage situation outside being shown on the TV, and also the scene where a cop tries to get into the bar by crawling through an air vent. Wyckoff foresees this and shorts into the vent, killing the cop. The same thing happens in The Hard, except that Willie is unharmed.

*Lord I-sheet for this thriller directed by Gerald Mayer, son of MGM studio boss Louis B. Mayer. The year after it was released, Louis B. Mayer was fired by Nicholas Schenck, head of the corporate office in New York, after 27 years of running the studio. Not that there's any connection.*

## STINGRAY (CNS)

by Greg Kikine

"If I didn't love that truck, I'd kill her," Longene says about Abby's best friend, the vicious female villain in this slightly tongue-in-cheek 1978 low budget action film, which combines semi-spirited firearms fatalities with slow country saloon music including xylophone and steazy bar to a wonderful mix of comedy and violence. The stunts are great and the ADR and location sound bad. The cops are bumbling and the villains cruel. This picture was filmed in the towns surrounding St. Louis.

The plot concerns a thieving Longene and his partner Tony who rip off a bank of drug dealers in the beginning, bravely gunning their way in an alleyway after realizing there was a timing device placed on the money. They drive around in a blue Chevrolet and the cops hunt them at a drive-thru eatery, but get nothing on them because they put the stacks of coke and money in a 1964 Chevrolet Stingray bought by 8 young guys, one played by Chris Mitchum, son of Robert. The course of the film is the 8 guys being chased by Longene and his gang, which includes Abby Brodowski, played by Sherry Jackson, and Ronco, played by Cliff "Futzy" Beach. Mr. Garrett from *HALLOWEEN II*. Abby is a foul mouthed and incompetent killer. A la Ma Barker. In one scene she is dressed as a cop and pulls up alongside a cop car while they are fleeing in a report and proceeds to blast them with her assault rifle loaded with explosive rounds, resulting in a magnificent explosion. She also runs over a young girl at the "Dew Drop Inn" food stand, but the girl survives. She wears a sexy '70's outfit of a red button down shirt with black vest and bell bottom jeans. Her other weapon of choice is a 40 Weaver GM pistol.

Police track the kids in the Stingray killed the 8 cops, so now both cops and villains are out to waste the kids. Adding to the idiosyncrasies are the police captain having a grudge against Longene and a long-standing desire to hurt him, while Longene has a love, blarney, omphomorous laugh that must be heard to be believed.

Longene shakes down a banker type named "Big" to find out about the timing device. The ugly, repugnant character combined with the dated music give the film a sense of '70's antiquity. A chase scene reminiscent of *Easy Rider* has a group of hillbillies cutting off the gang while they are chasing the Stingray, who then proceed to grenade their hillbilly track, following the destruction with laughter. A chase in the woods has Abby accidentally killing Ronco, while she roasts to with anonymity. She then visits a mortuary at gunpoint from a naked couple in the woods and is on her way West the 2 kids are in a hitch her doing a number 8 and concluding about lack of toilet paper when the gang shows up. A drunk motor for Abby, played by John Carl Goodson, who would go on to direct *THREE AND THREE THE LITTLE PARTY VII*, gave his words lit as fire by Abby. After a ridiculous bar brawl and fight scene, the 2 kids get away with Tony's machine gun. Longene decides that Abby is going to rip them off so he tries to run her over and dislodge her, leaving with Tony.

The next day, the 2 kids pick up a beautiful blond hitchhiker who will help them the rest of the film. They paint the Stingray black to hide it from the cops and villains, but run it through a car wash, making it red again. Abby, now scared, is walking along a country road, and hitchhiker. When a male motor pulls over and starts to flirt with her, she gives him 5 blasts to the face from her GM and takes the man down. Longene and Tony are bent upon by Abby, who kills Longene with an ax. Longene takes Tony hostage and they chase the Stingray to the final battle on the waterfront of East St. Louis. Tony shoots Abby, saying he won't share the money with a crazy bawd. She is injured, but finishes him with the GM. As she slips into the car, snatching the door on Tony's corpse's shotgun, it also kills her and blasts her, tumbling her from the film. The cops show up and are happy to see all the bodies dead. After some drama, while hanging off the bridge, the 2 kids and the blonde escape with the money.

This is a great film and highly recommended. Anyone who likes '70's B movie will enjoy the raw perfect mix of gunplay and comedy, coupled with footage of hook towns and picnic areas. The gunshots sound like actual samples from the weapons used in the film and the editing and stunts are first rate. Should really be rediscovered.

Get wrecked! Get chased!  
Get smashed! Get it on!  
The big red hot one  
is in town!



*Stingray*  
...it burns up the screen!

STINGRAY starring CHRISTOPHER MITCHUM  
LES LANNOM WILLIAM WATSON  
and SHERRY JACKSON as ABBY, introducing SONORA THEODORE  
Executive Producer DONALD R. HAM and BILL L. BRUCE  
Written and Directed by RICHARD TAYLOR

THE LANNOM PRODUCTION  
Produced by DONALD R. HAM

Directed by RICHARD TAYLOR

AVCO EMBASSY PICTURES Presents  
A VICTOR COMPANY FILM

1978/1979/1980



# GROG'S BUSTED BREAD

## RANTS TO BRING YOU DOWN AND LIFT YOU UP!

By Grog Sikiere

Bridging the 10 year gap: Is the new millennium a bust for kids who grew up in the 1990's?

This last weekend I was hanging out in the suburbs with an old friend. We are both in our early 30's and he was speaking in the most negative of fashions about dating and especially dating girls who were significantly younger than he, those who were born in the early 60's and onward. This age group has recently been called 'millennials' by psychologists. More significantly, they're those who had the Internet in high school. He lamented how today, in trying to have conversation with them, he was won over by those who knew some of his childhood things. But it was funny, he explained, because they couldn't really know those things as they were not born or old enough to have experienced them at the time. I told him to lighten up, but he continued saying, "If you are rejected by them, it's not just by a girl, but by an age. That is, if you are deep in a career that you don't like or just plain unemployed. You see, they had more generalized media degrees, so they learned photoshop and web design very early on, whereas we fine arts folks were dropped, obsolete in a new job market and world. So they get jobs easier now." I was getting depressed by him. "I said come on, you're being a downer and you're not right either!" Right as I said that we walked by a high school sign that read: "Welcome the class of 2011." Pretty soon I was depressed like he was!

The number 2011 was far into the future as we knew it in the 1990's, shown in films like *SLASHFEST* and *FLYING*. We knew while living in the 80's that someday we would hit the year 2000. That was exciting and a driving nuclear force. In shows like *Back Rogers*, even watched in re-run in 1993, *Back Rogers*' departure date of 1997 was looked at as the future. I look at the year 2009 now in 2009 and it still looks futuristic to me.

2008 is almost done, this decade already gone. What was new in the year 2009? *American Idol*. X-Men 3, *Britney Spears*. Things seem the same as now, 185 years later. No progress in science and music. What came new with the last decade: Technology advances, the iPod, mass use of cell phones. So what? Then came the devil's call to video games and music, ostensibly visible over the second half of the decade, thanks in part to the birth of social networking sites and person to person communication reduced to text messages only.

Some things I lived for are gone now and we didn't get to say goodbye to them. Remember for a moment certain tasks going to a record store, browsing for a while through the art, then buying a CD. Putting it in, hearing it load, seeing the track listing on the back of the CD? Now, that's a long CD, huh?

When I look back at memories I haven't thought of in a while, like seeing a video game in a store in 1985, or a science class task in 1984, it's so long ago. It is like a fictional dream memory. I had another life before. It existed, it took a long time, and I was very conscious in it. Now, now I'm busted out too. I'll have to avoid those science talks while walking by suburban high schools because I'm not sure where I'm going with this. But that's why it's Busted Bread.



# The Screamproof Coffin



Casting a critical eye on modern  
low-budget horror movies

By AJ Westphalen

## WALLED IN

Serge Brécourt, the prolific French science fiction and fantasy writer, started writing a series of horror novels in 1993. He published a new book every two months, with each one tackling a different traditional horror trope like werewolves and ghost ships. But after only two years he abandoned the project, in part due to burn out and in part from harassment by real life scientists following the publication of *Le Murmur d'un 14e étage*. What Floor is Hell?, a book about a worldwide Satanic conspiracy.

WALLED IN is a Canadian and French co-production based on a 1991 book in that series, *Les Émancipés*. (The *Emancipated*, *Lee Remains*) was originally the haunted house contribution to the cycle, but it doesn't have the visible or palpable specters common to the genre. In fact, the supernatural element is initially downplayed in favor of a more mundane serial killer story, but by the two thirds mark even the serial killer story is resolved and the film asserts its true identity as a entry in the "architectural horror" sub genre, in which the building itself is the source of the evil.

Michèle Babin plays Sue Wallace, a recent college grad with an engineering degree, who plans to follow in her father's footsteps by becoming a building demolition expert. As a graduation present, her father gives her an enormous concrete apartment building standing alone on the plains of rural Quebec to blow up. It was originally designed by a crazed architect named Maletreux, who was killed and walled up it, along with other tenants, 15 years before by a serial killer. Today only four residents remain: overbooked Mary and her horny, lonely teenage son Jimmy, a scowling old black man weary of the trouble of his new life, and a batty old lady safeguarding the architect's collection of rare and obviously relevant books.

The tenants all suffer from neuroses springing from their social isolation. Droopy Jimmy roams around the building using a maze of tunnels hidden inside the walls like SILENT SCREAM, watching Sue as she sleeps and bathes—he gets to see her naked, but we never do. When the old black man isn't in his room listening to scratchy records on his phonograph, he's wandering the deserted upper floors, whispering an axe into the walls to express his displeasure about losing his apartment. And Mary, visited by the serial killer, traces the hole in the wall from which her husband's body was extracted as a shrine, laying flowers on it and talking to it as though it were a ghost.

Against the warnings of his wife, Jimmy quickly falls in love with Sue, and as strange things start happening she becomes dependent on his despite his obvious lust for her. But their tentative relationship is cut short by the arrival of Peter, Sue's wispy boyfriend.

Sue's movie takes an unexpected turn. Fearful of losing both Sue and his boss, Jimmy kills Peter and imprisons her in the hollow center of the building, originally designed by Maletreux as a temple for human sacrifice in the style of the Egyptian pyramids. Immediately after being thrown into the chamber, Sue is raped by Maletreux, who, in a trial reversal of the story explained until now, was actually the serial killer and not just one of his victims, and who has been held captive there by Mary for thirteen years as punishment for killing her husband. So reveals to Sue that his plan is to sacrifice himself to the building, which will guarantee the punishment. Meanwhile, Sue's father and his men have cleared out everyone except Mary and Jimmy and set the demolition charges to bring down the structure, unaware that she's inside.

The metaphor could not be more obvious. The film's cinematic struggle is not good against evil, but between the opposing symbols of creation and destruction: the architect/creator of the building and its demolisher/destroyer, fighting inside the building's heart for the destiny of its body. Given Brécourt's dyspeptic view of society, Maletreux's reaction is easily recognizable as a BenLieu and Sue as the force of progress trying to bring it down. Although in the novel Sue is a journalist, the functions a crusading reporter and demolisher's score is a corrupt society such as ours are not so dissimilar as to distract comparisons.

Like dark hallways crowded by frightened children, the movie's sexual undercurrents, by far its most fascinating aspects, are left unexplored, possibly as a concession to portentious North American horror fans. The incestuous relationship hinted at between Mary and Jimmy remains unresolved, making its function in the early scenes nothing but a red herring designed to set an unsettling tone for the audience rather than define the characters' relationships.

More importantly, the idea of being "walled in" was clearly intended as a metaphor for Sue's repressed lesbianism. From her androgynous name and wardrobe to her ineffectual boyfriend, it's obvious the stone walls of the building she's been hired to blow up are internalizations of those holding in her own unfulfilled desires, and when Jimmy confronts her with his suspicions, her conflicted response is the only scene in which her character transcends the blonde generalization of her role. Though born in England, Babin has the look of an archetypal American small town beauty queen, but lacks the expressive charisma that could give her more distinctive leading roles.

The film's chief failing is that rather than use her looks to challenge or define the values they represent, it pulls back into conventionalism just when it should transgress. Dry and cold feeling, the film was shot in the dreariest Quebecian smoglight between October 28 and December 1, 2007, and its flat, dull look parallels the script's unwillingness to drag its shadowy sexual neuroses into the light.

It's clear that the movie treats the possible liberation of Sue's lesbianism as a threat. Her rape happens after a fade out and Maletreux suffers no repercussions for it, if anything, this is the point where he starts to be humanized. The finale finds a rescued Sue reunited with her family, the building still standing thanks to its architect/rapist's sacrifice, and whatever dangerous self knowledge it contained still firmly walled up inside it.

## PUNISHER WAR ZONE

Relatively speaking, no one saw PUNISHER WAR ZONE. It slipped into theaters with limited advertising in early December, 2006, and fell out three weeks later, earning back less than a third of its \$80 million budget and making it one of the all time lowest grossing movies based on a comic book. The critics—who read pretensionally confused superheros and moral theorizing as the limits of power in order to gallantly give a positive review to a movie professed for people half their age—generally declared it to be an overly violent, humorless and sadistic stink bomb.

The movie begins with an assault on the Busetti crime family's New York mansion by the Punisher, who kills everyone in sight. The Punisher is a former law enforcement agent who dropped out of sight to become a vigilante dedicated to killing gangsters after his stoicly stoicly perfect family was wiped out by the mob but unlike most superheros, his identity is so secret to the public, forcing him to live in hiding in an underground lair beneath the city's subway system.

During the opening assault, the Don's twin son Billy escapes and reconnects with his brother at a plant that both recycle glass and makes some kind of meat pistons. Thanks to a tip from his ex partner Soap, the Punisher follows them there, but he's not the only one after Billy Busetti. The Peds have been following him for a while and have one of their own men planted in Billy's crew. The Punisher's indiscriminate killing backfires on him when he inadvertently shoots the undercover Fed in the midst of taking out several of Billy's henchmen. Billy falls into an industrial glass crusher and is left for dead by the Punisher, though he manages to survive some shrapnel.

As the undercover agent is being buried, the rest of the city rolls on. The guilt ridden Punisher decides to give up killing and leave town, but the Peds assign an agent to hunt his dog, and Billy, now reconstructed and renamed Zigzag, breaks his inmate brother out of jail to help his wreck vengeance on the undercover man's menacing family, the Punisher, and every sinner in New York.

After a thwarted attempt on the lives of the widow and her daughter that leaves Zigzag's right hand seen dead, he kidnaps the two women and holds them hostage in an abandoned hotel, issuing a personal challenge to the Punisher to come and get them. To defend himself he wires up anti Punisher resistance in the city's remaining criminal gangs by raising an army of Irish skin head barflies, opium den Chinese warlords, and blunt puffing ghetto blacks. The Punisher, cynically backed only by a small gang of genocidal Bushies, attacks the hotel and kills every living thing in it.

PUNISHER WAR ZONE is being reviewed here because at heart it's a horror movie, an urban nightmare where the mask has slipped off society's face to reveal the tribalism underneath. It's not afraid to traffic in the kind of blatant competition between ethnic groups that's been largely absent since early Hollywood films like *HEART OF THE CITY* and *FIVE STAR FINAL*.

The character of the Punisher first appeared the same year Michael Winner's *DEATH WISH* opened and obviously plays off the same fears. Burke and Soap are vigilante justice to defend their city from predatory gangs of Italians, blacks, Chinese and especially Russians, whose dualism to America is so great they willingly sell biological weapons to the "ragheads" upstairs, a modern version of selling rifles to the Indians. The Punisher's disregard for any law except his own—the end result of ethnic discrimination is underscored by his alliance with them for his final assault on Zigzag, putting THE "money of my money" credo to homicidal extremes.

Besides the widow, her daughter and the idealized suburban life they represent, there's nothing in the city worth saving. It's just a moon, gaudy playground for criminals and an endless grid of warehouses, alleys and abandoned buildings. The few individuals who side with the Punisher are motivated by self interest. His friend Microchip, a Jewish arms dealer, isn't above manipulating him for profit, but pays with his life at the end for his role as a sellout. His temporary sidekick Ink is a former gang member seeking personal atonement for unspecified crimes. Their fates follow the natural law of the film's universe, which is that rehabilitation can be achieved only through death.

As in *DEATH WISH*, the Punisher is a white arthouse whose psyche is damaged beyond repair, as equally corrupt as any of the ethnic gangs he's hunting but cynically redemptive. He feels no guilt because he unconsciously believes that our society reserves for him the right to destroy what his ancestors built but can no longer be maintained. This is the *Apocalypse* as depicted in modern white peoples' terms—we alone can "self destruct" Western society when it gets too rotten—and it's a theme fantasy in juvenile aimed at adolescent males. Likely born out of an increased feeling of powerlessness due to demographic changes, the fantasy dictates that when the system has gotten too out of control it either has to be destroyed to be rebuilt, like the credit card companies at the end of *WALL STREET*, or it requires a suicidal sacrifice of one's life/culture/identity to get the world back on track, as in *DOOMED DANGER*. The end of the world as divine punishment for man's wickedness goes back to the myths that evolved into the Biblical story of Noah, but the idea of society consciously doing it to themselves, like suicides on the river bank, is a key insight into the worldwise that has captivated the post religious experts of American society and the entertainment industry that caters to them.

Director Lexi Alexander is a German, which probably explains the lack of neo Nazis, normally Hollywood's favorite bogymen, among the Punisher's antagonists. Or it could be a riposte to Israeli producers Simon Wiesner and Wesker Cohen, who turned the South Bronx into an Arpano wilderness territory full of Imperial Holocaust survivors in the stellarly hyperbolic urban revenge fantasy *DEATH WISH 3*.

Stylistically the film weaves natural lighting for as artificial, multi colored look heavy on red, blue and gold, similar to a comic book's. As far as cinematic antecedents go, it recalls some of the more seductive pop art movies of the 1960's, but rather than mandarin neo Italian or French filmmaker yet again in order to describe the ornate colored lighting scheme, it's better to think of it in synchro terms, specifically as an expressionistic representation of the gangsters' ostentatious bling their gold chains, pucky rings and capped teeth beamed large onto the city's dirty walls, a place so corrupt it's the only color the downtrodden masses see.

## CHILL

Like *BRANINGTON*, Serge Rodnarsky's *CHILL* is a horror film about a sad scientist's failed attempts to artificially create human life. Both are based on lesser known HP Lovecraft tales not considered part of the writer's "great texts," the eight stories that form the foundation of his reputation. By narrative necessity, *CHILL* expands upon the original 2000 word story "Cool Air" by adding a female lead and a secondary antagonist, as well as a monstrous leatherface like killer more suited to an Edgar Wallace thriller than to anything in Lovecraft's oeuvre. But aside from Lovecraft's purview in the unknown, no one is likely to care about what's been altered, but only how well it's been integrated into his creepy brain story.

See Thomas Chalkford, a wannabe screenwriter new to the neighborhood, gets a job at a deli owned by the mysterious Dr.

Munoz, whose rare illness forces him to stay in an air conditioned room at all times. To Lowcraft, Munoz is "a man of birth, cultivation, and discrimination," and an example of "winking intelligence and superior blood and breeding." Frustrated here, he's sure of a widow, so it comes as no surprise when it is revealed he and his deformed assistant prowled the streets of the San Fernando Valley at night to kidnap prostitutes whose bodies will be harvested to keep Munoz alive.

In his book on Lowcraft, Michel Houellebecq explains that many of Lowcraft's protagonists were simple projections of the writer himself, but "Good Air" offers a possible alternative to this commonly accepted theory. It was written one month before Lowcraft's forever left New York, following the breakup of his marriage and several years of unsuccessful attempts at finding work. Urban New York was a hellish experience for the antisocial Lowcraft, and it's not much of a stretch to see Munoz's state of living death as a creative reinterpretation of the author's own predicament. The doctor is a pedantic and refined man who cannot mix with the rabble of the city and spends his time studying in rooms lined with books, a position Lowcraft found himself in as his life deteriorated to the point where he was willing his furniture to survive. By making himself the villain of "Good Air" as opposed to the narrower protagonist, Lowcraft may have been commenting on how degraded he had become from living in New York.

In the film, Sam awes Maria, who owns the vintage clothing shop across the street. Maria is being stalked by an ex one night stand Detective Defacto (James Ransome), who's also investigating the prostitute's disappearance. Since Sam is new to the area, he immediately becomes Defacto's prime suspect, and his situation isn't helped when the detective discovers his budding relationship with Maria. In the film's most surprising scene, Defacto directly accuses Sam of being responsible for the killings, adding that if he wants to kill Maria he may, providing he leave town immediately after in a movie otherwise full of stereotypical characters like the black pimp and his hench of white hoodlums, this deft sleazy authority stands out.

Munoz, of course, has been biologically dead for fifteen years but has been keeping himself alive through his hooker harvesting. Upon learning the doctor's secret, Sam and Maria are kidnapped by Munoz and his henchman, and Sam is offered the intriguing choice of dying for good or dying and becoming a walking dead like Munoz, who needs a rare assistant. Thanks like this indicate Rodríguez is more than a hack turning out product for an undertheaching video market, and that he has a good, if undisciplined, ear for dialogue.

Unfortunately, like Lowcraft's himself, the film is much better indoors than out. Filmed in Burbank, Northridge and similarly unremarkable places around the Valley, the haplessly shot outdoor scenes, presumably done without permits, betray a lack of time, money and vision. One of cinema filmmaking's basic rules is the inverse relationship between the film's budget and the strength of its authored voice, and Rodríguez wasted a great opportunity in not using the Valley to its fullest effect.

Although just a few miles from America's film production center, the San Fernando Valley bears few obvious signs of it. Mainly a series of strip malls and downscale immigrant neighborhoods, at night it takes on a strange, Ballardian feel. The wide roads lined with darkened warehouses and shuttered stores resemble a deserted civilization somehow thwarted before finding its purpose. In the more industrial areas, peaks of smoke rise along the side of the road in time with cars, and teenage drag races seem borne out of panic rather than machismo. Out on the fringes of the Valley at night, glowing factories and well-patrolled plants rise from the arid ground like nightmarish monadic mountains as and as anything Lowcraft imagined. Even the mountains overlooking and enveloping the highways, pressing up close against the sparse streetlights and leaving just enough room for a highway to pass through on the way out of the Valley and into the deserted, underdeveloped peaks beyond. Those who advocate gun control have never known the desolation of these places.

This is what Rodríguez needed to show in order to faithfully translate Lowcraft's vision of early twentieth century New York as Hell into a twenty first century Valley Hell. As the human presence in the Valley quickly tapers off to the north and west of the main arteries, the landscape becomes only to psychotic, depressive, and the atavistic type of Californians still living like Dust Bowl refugees or characters from *DRIVE MY CAR*. This is where the horrors of today would rent their office space to hide from the world. These are the places where conspiracy cars can roll through the night unobserved while hunting for lost or lost souls. This is the civilization that Lowcraft would have feared.



Lowcraft based Munoz's residence in "Good Air" on a friend's apartment at 317 West 146th street in Manhattan. This is the building today.

by Wheatpeasy and Elders

The old times still among us can remember going to the movie theater to see a double feature with a cartoon and news reels, all for a nickel. Hollywood was generous with its product back then, giving half a day's worth of entertainment for the price of an apple, but there was a different relationship between the movies and the public in those days. Audiences were ravenous for entertainment, and the studios were serious about appealing to them without lowering its standards to do so. Each studio released a new movie every week on average while simultaneously producing old favorites, and their tight control of actors and actresses turned the off screen images of actors stars into better versions of themselves, as opposed to the privileged cinema geeks they've become today. These days, too many people fetishize old films whose pre-code realism is more in line with our own degraded scene while overlooking the fact that the overwhelming majority of that era's films were awful, hopeful and free from cynicism. The living memory of this bygone movie watching culture is fast disappearing, now to be remembered only in fact and not experience.

The Baby Boomers had a different movie culture. They've tied their memories of drive ins, creature features, the "art houses" and the late show on TV to the vanished values of post war, pre 1967 America. This was their age of innocence, and their childhood sense of discovery is inseparable from their adolescence resistance of staying up all night to catch a new slide on TV or of sneaking into the front seat of their parents' car to see over the dashboard at the screen across the field. But like the earlier era, this movie watching culture has also gone off the air, with old films now relegated to specialty cable channels and "art houses" reduced to showing quirky and crowd pleasing foreign movies that are essentially imitations of Hollywood dross with a foreign flavor. Drive ins still hang along as a kitschy place to bring kids, though their parking lots full of outright sleazebags with television screens in the backseat, a far cry from the roedy and communal atmosphere that once existed at them.

Our generation had the video store, which is now going the way of the drive in. If literature was the major art form of the 18th century, film was its 20th century equivalent, and a video store was a library of films that helped people recognize the media's contribution to the arts and society. But unlike libraries, which are publicly run and have traditional guidelines for what to carry, video stores were privately owned, resulting in a more uneven and sometimes frustrating distribution of films. A store's films reflected the taste and entrepreneurial skills of its owner, who needed to know how many \$90 copies of a new release he would need to buy every week. There was also the question of which stock holder titles to carry. Unlike literature, which has a reasonably well defined or amiable canon, film history is chaotic, and because no single video store could possibly carry all the titles a burgeoning film scholar wants to see, memberships at multiple stores were necessary.

There was a chain of stores called Palmer Video that served the suburbs of New Jersey just outside of New York. At its peak between 1987 and 1994, Palmer had over half a dozen locations and published a glossy monthly magazine that was mailed free to members. Our local Palmer held barbeques, sponsored local sports and even gave out sunglasses branded with the Palmer name. It eventually became well known enough in New Jersey to lose the "Video" portion of its name in everyday conversation in the same way Blockbuster has.

On Friday and Saturday nights, the flagship store would be packed, with lines halfway to the door. Palmer tried to maintain a balanced stock by including a healthy selection of foreign and cult movies that likely didn't rent too well, but the ones who worked there loved movies and were constantly buying stock titles along with the new releases. Most of our pre film school film education came from here, and in recent years it's been said to an Indian man who has served it to a smaller store around the corner and who has kept it on life support despite its waning clientele.

We also belonged to three other Palmer Videos. One was small but neatly located in a well traveled strip mall in between an Old Lot and a Barnes & Noble, which in the late 1980's was quieter than it is today. Though we went to video many treasures, it gave us copies of the *THREE INC. DAYS OF THE DEAD* and *WOLFE ASSAULT ON PERIMETER 13*, which were difficult to find in the days before prices dropped to sell through levels. This Palmer is now a gourmet store. It later moved around the corner to a bigger, glassier and better lighted space, and we can remember riding our bike home from that new space with both *WOLFE CASE* and *Crispino's AUTUMN* swaying from our handlebars in a plastic bag. Eventually this one closed down as well and is now a day care center with the irritating name, "Wee Wee Grow". To which we can only reply, "Oh no, we don't".

The other two Palmer Videos were in more urban Glenside townships nearby. One of them kept their *Synthesizer* stuffed video boxes in big, swinging metal gates like the kind that hold porters. This one had the big box for *7 DOORS TO DEATH* and a lot of Spanish videos for the surrounding Puerto Rican community. It was always crowded but their stock selection was weak. It's now an R&B Block office. The other one had the *KNO VIDEO* of *DEEP END* and *DEED WITH THE GENERAL PLUMAGE*. We only went to this one once, for those two titles, in the summer of 1990. Long gone now, we're not sure we could find the spot it once was.

Tapes could accommodate several video stores, such as the deserted for movies back then. Mountain Video was in a small corner building divided into two commercial units, in a quiet residential area across the street from a pizzeria, drug store and deli. It was the smallest video store we'd ever been in, and most of its stock titles dated from the early days of VHS. Who knows where those tapes came from? By 1988 there was a pay between the new release wall and the stock tapes of about 7 years. The heavy set young man who worked there walked with a limp and sat on a wooden stool behind the counter reading paperback, since the store had no TV. It was shaped like a narrow, rectangular living room, with the borrow section on the right and action on the left, and a double sided shelf in the middle that had movies and everything else. It kept the tapes behind the counter and filled their display cases with a block of *Synthesizer*, and in our memory always seems a little dark inside. From here we were able to rent a copy of *Key Video's* *INTERNO* and *WOLFE*'s big box, our version of *PAT LAURENT* and *DELLY THE END*. Mountain Video is now the office for a pest control company.

Around the corner from Mountain Video was *TVT Inn*, the strangest video store in the area. It was in a strip mall on a highway and was always being robbed by highway men on their way home to Newark. *TVT* stood for Used Video Tapes, and they took up their video boxes and slipped the pieces into white plastic cases that had the tape inside. The tapes were placed in shelves that jutted out from the wall at a 45 degree angle, so the wall looked like it was covered with animal scales. *TVT* was kind of like a flea market. Besides tapes it sold CDs, video games, t-shirts, and even a grandfather clock, for \$200. Tape rentals were \$3 but any of the older ones could be bought for \$1000. This is how we acquired the original *Magnus* tape of the worst *WOLFE*: *WOLFE*, *THE WOLF*, *DEATH*, and a boxset copy of *Blockbuster* for \$8. *TVT* is now a liquor store.

Highway Video was only open a few years and sat at the back of a small shopping plaza behind a Dunkin' Donuts. It also kept its tapes behind the counter but flattened the video boxes on display so they could be slid into the type of clear clear plastic envelopes that graded comic books are stored in. Unlike Mountain Video it had an adult section, which was a hidden very well behind swagging western action doors, but the rest of the store was just as raggy. We rifled through the plastic sleeves the

way you were locked through life in a record store, flipping them toward you. The store wasn't particularly adventurous, though they had Bobbitt's early animated service like **HEAVY TRAFFIC** and **WHITE THE CAT** on the Warner Brothers label. In the summer of 1985 we rented a lot of our movies from Wilford because a beautiful blonde haired college girl from Staten Island worked there. She was older than us by only a couple years, but that was enough to keep her interest in us at a purely customer service level. Nevertheless we rented some mainstream crap that summer in the hopes of chatting her up about it then at any other point in our lives. Wilford Video is now a financial investment office.

Video Video had a strange name, a dark purple interior door and the worst service of any store in the area. It had the Monty Python service the other stores didn't, and because it was in an upper class neighborhood it kept up on obscure new releases from Europe more than any other, this was a store to get lost in for hours on end, with a huge foreign section that included possibly illegitimate copies of **SHOGUN** and **KAKUJIN/PRINCE** and a horror section full of obscure early 1980's movies that never leapt the digital divide. The best video stores opened early in the home and kept their old stock on the shelf, and Video Video consistently kept their VHS tapes on display even after the overblowing DVDs took over. Defining a giant, it went out with a bang, selling off every old tape for a few dollars, a sale from which we emerged into the afternoon sunlight dazed, tired and hugging tape cardboard boxes full of tapes. The space that once housed Video Video has since been separated into two units, one of which is now a bank, the other of which is a store selling cyberspace educational toys for kids.

Video Playback will always have a warm spot in our hearts. It had the ambiance of a cheap book store and an owner who fits the stereotype of a movie store owner. The tapes were laid out along the wall and in cabinets with glass sliding doors in the center aisles. The owner obviously had a taste for schlock and shock, only adding to the girl free zone vibe of the place. Whether by accident or design, he was heavy on his intended on Italian horror, which is where we found the big box tapes of **BLACK TERN ONE SLOWLY** and **BAT OF BLOOD**, as well as **BLOOD AND BLACK LACE**. Video Playback is now a UPS store.

Schiller Video was down some stairs, next to a train station parking lot. Our memory of it is vague, but we do know it closed down unexpectedly, taking with it the **WHITE THE DRAGON** tape that we had given them to repair, and which we never saw again.

There are others that we may have patronized just once or twice and whose names we can't recall anymore. One moved into the space where the Odd Lot mentioned earlier had previously occupied—the Palmer Video adjacent to it having packed up and left. The former Odd Lot's floor space was far too big for a video store, and it didn't last long. We remember visiting **WILL OF THE STONE** **WOMEN** there sometime between November of 1988 and February 1990. Not long after that it was gone, replaced with a used book store called **Book Lovers' Outlet**, which also didn't last long. It's now a Shoprite Wine and Spirits store.

Another half-remembered store was down in Cape May, New Jersey, where we rented **SAVING PRIVATE** and **ED WOOD** while on vacation with our parents. **THE POWER** was shot in Cape May, and we remember seeing that tape on the shelf, though we wouldn't actually see the film for several more years.

Down in Montgomery County, Maryland, and the Eastern Shore in the 1980s, there were other wonderful video stores:

Video Village, Potomac, MD. This was the main store I went to. It was in a small space in Celis John Mall next to the popular toy store Toys 'R Us. It perpetually had the poster for **HOUNDS OF THE SACRED MOUNTAIN** starring Ellen Westbrooke. **QUANTAL**, **JANE** & **Joe** down on the side of a shelf near the dock. That big turquoise skull and red spider was memorable and ended in on the Indy crew. Busted **THE TERMINATION** there upon its release on VHS as a new release. Around 1986 when Jerry's Sub and Mike took over this space, Video Village took over the space across the food court in the former Hallmark store which was about 5x larger. Spent a lot of time perusing the horror section which was right near the entrance. Horror section was near the corner through calico double doors, but I caught a glimpse of **WHITE THE CAT** (a rated cartoon?) I'll never forget the time where **BLACK MOON RISING** was a new release and the store was closed and they just played it to it was a new release and handed it through the gate. Didn't know what it was but I would soon know about **San Quint**. Space is now smaller but still a video store, Blockbuster, yyyyy.



**Brill's Potomac and Rockville, MD** This was a chain video store in the DC area and the most popular one in the 60's before Blockbuster. There was one on Rockville Pike a few stores over from Type B 34 that had a 38' TV set sitting. I never belonged to the chain until they added the weird small one in Potomac in the back of Peoples Drug in Galtin John Wall where I rented *FRIDAY 13*. Truly strange, it was watched off by white chain racks in the back left corner of the drugstore. We joined the Rockville one around 1968 and I rented *STAR CALLED RAMA*, which they had 50 copies of and I purchased the VHS of *AIRPLANE*, my favorite film at the time. Brill's would later shut down their video stores and become an ISP in the mid 80s before selling that business to SON.

**High's and Glen Echo Pharmacy, Glen Echo, MD** This was a weird place, but typical of the 60's. There were convenience stores that would stock VHS rentals, usually a small collection in the back. The High's at Glen Echo did this around 1967 and they had these weird boxes when you rented them, which were the cheap plastic brown leather looking ones with a sleeve to put in a title card; in this case, the card had the movie title scrawled on it in black sharpie in bad handwriting. All I remember renting there was *THE REQUIEM* (which I didn't watch) and *IRON EAGLE 1* or *2*. Later, they moved the collection next door to Glen Echo Pharmacy where it looked even more awkward, but stayed well into the mid 90s. Goudgous Plaza next door would give you a free rental in the form of a plastic poker chip which you could use to rent at the pharmacy and later on at the above mentioned Video Village in Galtin John Wall, which I remember using as my final rental store, *PIRATES 2* and *IRAZUL*.

**Vango Knights, Silver Spring, MD** This was a chain store with a branch in the White Oak area of Silver Spring. The Daps had a knight riding a sword, and it was farther out but the only place I knew that had *CHINESEAVE* and *HEAVY TRAFFIC*. I begged my friend who was a member there to rent them. He had the good grace to trust me to watch them and then drive all the way back to return them on my own. Imagine that!

**Woody's Video, Potomac and Rockville, MD** This store had 2 locations I knew about, one in Potomac and later one in Rockville. This was one of those flimsy video stores where the boxes were displayed more like museum objects, given a large space on a shelf with the box art facing the customer. Went here to rent the obscure VHS of Michael Mann's *THREE*. The Rockville store had a really modern dark glass exterior, which was later part of a fitness center, and you would enter in the back near a Kinko. We went here to rent the also obscure VHS of *DAT OF THE DEAD*. This was the only video store in the area that rented Laserdiscs and later on when we had a LD player we rented the Elite Entertainment Edition of *SHANKS*.

**Tower Video, Rockville, MD** This was like any other such store in the nation and they had a great selection. Used this one a lot to find the four star movies listed in *Rollins's Movie Guide*. The place that schooled me on movies during high school. Would sometimes rent 2 a day, greatly contributing to my solid C average in high school!

**Blockbuster Video, Rockville, MD** In Wintergreen Plaza on Rockville Pike. Like any other Blockbuster, but had *ASSAULT ON PREHISTORIC 13* on Media VHS which was new. I joined this branch solely to rent that title!

**West Coast Video, Bethesda, MD** Another chain, this branch was in downtown Bethesda in a strip mall across the street from the public library. Stocked the more porno *CELESTIAN* there before it was banned for being too similar to *BATMAN RETURNS*. Also rented new releases like *WOLFE 2*, *KRUMHOLTZ*, and *PROTECTOR 2*. All winners.

#### The Barbers Shops

**Chicken Man, Queen Anne, MD** This was a 7-11 type store and another odd place for rentals. Since been moved to Greenbridge and Ballingway, MD. In the 60's this branch had a few tapes pushed into a high back corner. My first sighting of the box for *SHOOT TRAIN TO YERKIN*.

**Deli, Outside of Steenswood, DE** Another mom and pop 7-11 type store. Had a giant painting of a cheeseburger, with a puny slice of American cheese on the side of the building. Didn't have too many videos, but I remember seeing *JUNCTION 13* there!

**Towne Video, Annapolis Beach, DE** A great store, on Route 1 before the exit to the beach. Was still a video store until this year. This place was the motherlode and the place where I discovered all the weird horrors with terrifying box art, like *TO ALL A GOOD NIGHT*. They also had posters for *WHEELER OF EVIL* and *STILLWY*. Also saw *THE LIME* here and rented *FRIDAY THE 13TH PART 2* and *3* and *1300* among others!

Like used book stores, video stores have quietly and quickly disappeared. Videotapes themselves gave way to DVDs, which the studios are now desperate to phase out and replace with some new HD format that will last only until movies can be sent on demand directly to a TV in your home by wire. When that happens it's likely the physical format will disappear entirely, the same way celluloid will eventually be used solely by video cameras while everyone else shoots digitally.

But unlike used book stores, the dying of the video store is closely tied to the way people experience the medium. People don't read less, but have surely found other ways to acquire books. Without access to a local library of films, however, people's attention has just moved from one type of storage (tape to another), and the competition from television, video games and the World Wide Web has deleted film from the position it once had as the medium of cultural record to something fleeting, insignificant and, God help us, just an "event".

The dividing line between the Baby Boomers and Generation X is best described in which film—going experience each cinema. Generation X had only the ball and of drive ins, grindhouses and Creature Features, not enough of them to constitute a real education in film. To do this, they needed to rely on videotapes and the video stores that supplied them. Loring thus is like losing a favorite teacher.

But there are so gringos here for retail stores, and history is quickly forgetting these places. Most of them have left no traces in the digital age. The only record of them now is in our memories, where they're linked forever to the movies we rented from them. And in that way, the films themselves have become contraband to these forgotten places, as well as reminders of the movie watching culture that our generation once had and has now forever lost.



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